

NSC BRIEFING

28 July 1959

LAOS--BACKGROUND INFORMATION

I. COMMUNIST PATHET LAO (PL)

- A. Following end of Indochina War in July 1954 Pathet Lao forces defied armistice terms on integration and held two northern provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly by military force.
- B. Next three years saw desultory negotiations and sporadic fighting between both sides.
- C. Integration agreement finally reached in November 1957 with 1,500 of total PL troop strength of about 7,500 coming under national army control.
- D. Other 6,000 demobilized and scattered throughout 12 Laotian provinces where they have augmented Communist grass roots subversion campaign.
- E. Half of 1,500 former PL troops under government control formally integrated this spring but other 750 took to bush, with most of them currently reported to be in North Vietnamese territory just across east central Laos border.

II. LAOTIAN ARMY

- A. 25,000 men, organized on battalion level plus some 13,000 para-military.
- B. Army's 30 battalions (26 infantry, 1 artillery, 2 parachute, 1 reconnaissance) spread about evenly in Laos' four military regions.

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- C. Battalions generally broken down into platoons and company units and dispersed on internal security mission.
- D. Extremely low capabilities of Lao army evident in inability to contain and subsequently round up defecting PL battalion this spring.
- E. This fiasco expedited crash American training program to supplement regular French military mission in Laos. About 100 American instructors began arriving on 24 July.

III. NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY

- A. There are approximately ^{245,000} ~~12,000~~ North Vietnamese troops deployed along the Laotian border but most of North Vietnam's 300,000 man army continues to remain in the Tonkin delta area.

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